

Lightwoods Primary Academy



School Attendance Policy

Updated October 2022



SHIRELAND
COLLEGIATE ACADEMY TRUST

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1) Aims

Good attendance and punctuality are vital for any child to succeed at school and regular school attendance from an early age creates a culture about the importance of education and learning so that all can benefit equally. Every day missed has an impact on their learning and persistent absenteeism means they fall behind significantly and are at risk of achieving their full potential.

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Being on time at the start of the school day is equally important so that the teacher can begin with all of their class on time. Having a good routine and being punctual helps children understand the significance of being organised and arriving promptly every day as they grow up and are ready for a life beyond school.

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child, beginning from the early years and remains across the whole of their education.

2) Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

As an Academy this policy complies with our funding agreement and our Articles of Association.

3) School procedures

3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See DfE website for attendance codes.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Using the word 'registration'

- The term 'registration' can carry several meanings, such as:
- The exact time when the register is taken
- The period of time from a register opening to a register closing
- The period of time in which pupils are expected to arrive in school, at the end of which the register is taken
- The overall process of recording attendance

At Lightwoods Primary Academy, we use the term 'registration' to mean the period of time from a register opening to a register closing.

For pupils at our Castle Road site, children must arrive in school by 8.45am on each school day ready for the register to be taken in class. For pupils at our Clent Road site, children must arrive in school by 9.00am on each school day ready for the register to be taken in class.

The register for the first session will be taken 5 minutes after door closure, and be completed by the class teacher within 10 minutes. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.00pm, for both sites, and be completed by the teacher within 10 minutes.

3.2 Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by the start of the school day or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6). Unacceptable reasons for being absent are for example, uniform not being ready or clean, headlice, looking after family members, transport issues, home appointments and other reasons deemed to be unacceptable by the school.

Reporting an unplanned absence

We do understand that there may be times, when a child is ill and the best place to be is at home with an adult. A sick child may be unhappy at school and unable to cope with schoolwork. If the illness is infectious, other children and teachers may also become ill, so the child must be kept at home.

Should your child have a highly infectious illness, tell us as soon as the doctor has confirmed this.

Procedures

Parents must notify the school by telephone if a child is absent or late.

Parents are expected to call the school in the **morning before the beginning of the school day** if their child is going to be absent due to ill health. There is an answering machine in the main office so a message can be left at any time. **A verbal message from a child is not acceptable.**

We will follow up any unexplained absence or lateness with a phone call and/or a letter and a possible home visit will take place after school have notified the Local Authority of a child's absence. The school will be notified of the outcomes following the home visit.

If your child needs to leave school during the day, please let us know in advance. Unless we have contact from the parent, the child will not be allowed to leave the school premises.

Punctuality and absences are regularly monitored by both the school and the school's Attendance Officer. Attendance is a legal requirement which is enforced by our schools, our Trust and our home Local Authority - further details can be found on their website.

The school will make a decision to accept a reason for a child's absence and whether to authorise that absence. In some circumstances further evidence of a child's illness may be requested, **such as a doctor's or hospital note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence.**

As a Trust we have a system in place to escalate any concerns about high levels of absence due to illness, including agreements about accessing addition services in order to provide appropriate support to pupils, particularly for long term illness.

Some examples of scenarios when medical evidence may be requested include:

- There are frequent, odd days of absence due to reported illness.
- Attendance is less than 90%.
- The same reasons for absence are frequently repeated.

- Where there is a particular medical problems and school may need evidence to seek additional support/provide support.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

Information is transferred to other schools in the event of a transfer/midyear admission, in line with GDPR by way of electronic data systems, common transfer form, national curriculum assessment records.

3.3 Medical or dental appointments

We encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary; an appointment at the start or end of the day would help minimise the amount of time out of class.

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence if this has been agreed; **advance notice is required for authorising these absences.**

Parents must phone or give written notice at least 48 hours before the appointment and provide evidence of the appointment to office staff.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

3.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed at will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

We track punctuality of all learners across the Trust and will ask to meet with families if it becomes a recurring issue. We have high expectations for punctuality and will follow up if the punctuality of any child falls below an acceptable level. Anything below 92% attendance or where a child is persistently being late for school/being collected early from school, will be referred to the Local Authority.

3.5 Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason; ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary; identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

- Those children whose attendance falls below national average will be closely monitored and further action considered. School will challenge the attitude of those pupils and parents who give a low priority to attendance

- All registers will be checked, and absences monitored on a daily basis.
- Schools will analyse individual pupil data to identify quickly patterns of absence (and punctuality) which cause concern and parents will be informed by the school where their child's attendance causes concern.
- School has a clear and escalating approach to intervention where there are concerns regarding school attendance. (See Section 4.2 for legal sanctions)
- After the school has attempted to address attendance issues with parents, and if there is no improvement the case will be escalated to the Standards and performance Committee within the trust and then the Local Authority.
- School has in place a system for enabling returning pupils to catch up on learning and reintegrate within the school.

3.6 Leaving school early during the day

- Pupils are not allowed to leave the site during the school day, unless accompanied by a member of staff or their known parent/carer; or to attend a school visit, an off-site scheduled lesson
- If a pupil has to leave the school during the day for illness or a parent is required to collect them for a medical appointment, their Parent is required to sign out at the School Office and speak to a senior member of staff. Where there are known medical appointments, parents should notify the school in advance and show evidence of the appointment.

3.7 Reporting to parents

Ahead of Parents' Evening an interim or full end of year report will include these figures and will be benchmarked against National Expectations.

Where attendance is a cause for concern or below 95%, parents and carers will be informed and invited to a meeting where an action plan to improve attendance is put in place. This information will be shared with the Local Authority and may result in a penalty notice.

4) Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

Our Principal may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as an instance where absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a child's rehabilitation from a medical or social emotional mental health, immediate leave due to family bereavement or consideration to a request for children of Service personnel. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Principal's discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

Procedure for requesting a planned absence:

DfE guidelines make clear that leave of absence during term-time should be regarded as exceptional.

All leave of absence requests will be unauthorised unless the circumstances are deemed to be exceptional.

- If a parent/carer considers they require their child to have a leave of absence for exceptional circumstances, they should complete an absence request form (available from the school office) and submit this to the school at least six weeks prior to the date required. School will respond to the request within two weeks.
- Parent/carers MUST provide evidence of the exceptional circumstance and will be required to meet with a senior member of staff.
- If the Principal deems that the reasons for the request are exceptional and authorises the absences a written reply confirming that the request has been authorised will be sent to the parent/carer.
- If the Principal deems that the reasons are not exceptional and the leave of absence will not be authorised, a written reply informing the parents of this decision for each child and warning of the legal implications of the absence been taken will be sent to each parent.
- If once notified in writing of the decision to unauthorise the leave of absence, the absence is taken it will be marked as an unauthorised absence on the pupils register.
- In the event of attendance being below 90% then the absences should be referred immediately to the Local Authority for consideration and could result in the issue of a penalty notice.

All children have equal access to a full education regardless of a child's gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, disability, parentage, sexual orientation or other status and we are committed to ensuring that all of our children attend school as fully as possible.

4.2 Legal sanctions

The Education Act 1996 states that:

“If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his parent is guilty of an offence (1A) and If in the circumstances mentioned in subsection (1) the parent knows that his child is failing to attend regularly at the school and fails to cause him to do so, he is guilty of an offence.”

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

Lightwoods Primary Academy will abide by the Sandwell Code of Conduct when deciding on penalty notices for term time absence. The decision on whether or not to fine a parent ultimately rests with the Principal. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the Principal deems it necessary to fine the parent, this request will be made through the local authority who will issue a penalty notice at the current rate (available from the local authority website). The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

As per the local authority rules, if the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

5) Strategies for promoting attendance

As a School we understand how important both good attendance and punctuality is and promote this with all children, with termly rewards for pupils who have exemplary attendance and are regularly punctual.

We ask families for their support in the following: -

- Making sure their child leaves for school with plenty of time to arrive on time.
- Supporting and encouraging their child by attending parents' evenings and other school events.
- Contacting the school to discuss any concerns regarding their child's attendance.
- Working partnership with the school to resolve any issues that are impacting on their child's attendance.

6) Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer monitors pupil absence on a daily basis where absence is connected to a safeguarding case and will be shared with the DSL and Safeguarding team.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning before the start of the school day if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

If a pupil's absence goes above 10 days in one academic year, we will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this.

If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continue to rise, we will consider involving Attendance Support Services.

The persistent absence threshold, outlined by the government, is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term, stored securely and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average and share this at our Standards and Performance Committee and Trust Board. We also look at, compare and monitor particular cohorts of children whose absences may be a cause for concern and those children identified as being in need of intervention and support. In the event of children being absent for 10 consecutive school days, the school will make contact with the relevant Local Authority. In addition to this contact may be made to the appropriate Safeguarding Board.

7) Roles and responsibilities

7.1 The Standards and Performance Committee (SPC)

The SPC is responsible for understanding the policy and procedures for absence and lateness and for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Principal to account to know and understand the policy and for the implementation of this policy.

7.2 The Principal

The Principal is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to the SPC.

The Principal also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

7.3 The Attendance Officer

The attendance officer:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the principal
- Works with education welfare officers at the Local Authority to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Helps prepare reports that include attendance and punctuality figures for SPC meetings.

7.4 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance accurately on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office within the specified timeframe (see Section 3.1).

They are also responsible for promoting good attendance and punctuality with their class and families

7.5 Office staff

Office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

8) Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as and when changes are required by the Principal. At every review, the policy will be shared with the SPC.

9) Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.